

[show additional data](#)

NT Mountain Plover *Charadrius montanus*

**2010 IUCN Red List Category** (as evaluated by BirdLife International - the official Red List Authority for birds for IUCN): **Near Threatened**

**Justification** This species is classified as Near Threatened because it has a moderately small population. However it is continuing to decline as a consequence of habitat loss and degradation resulting from cultivation, urbanisation, over-grazing, and changes in native herbivore populations.

**Family/Sub-family** Charadriidae

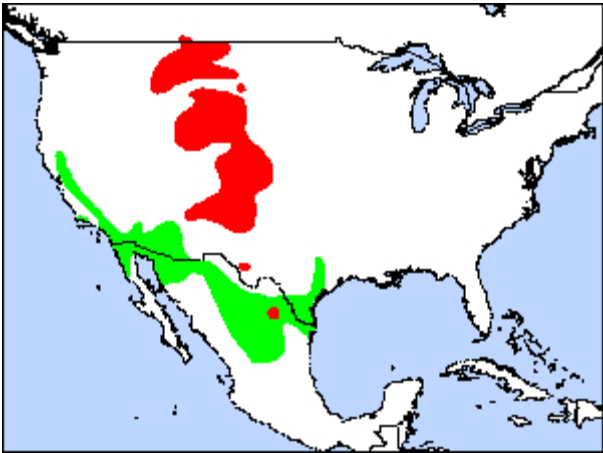
**Species name author** Townsend, 1837

**Taxonomic source(s)** AOU checklist (1998 + supplements), Sibley and Monroe (1990, 1993), Stotz et al. (1996)

**Identification** 21-23.5 cm. Pale brown plover. Upperparts brownish grey, underparts whitish washed buff on breast sides and flanks, white forehead and supercilium contrasting with black frontal bar and lores, black bill and long, pale brown-yellow legs. Non-breeding adults lack black on head, have rufous fringes to fresh wing feathers, more extensive and buffy breast markings. Juvenile similar but supercilium buff and broader, more buffy fringes and marked underparts. In flight, looks long-winged and shows white wing-bar, underwing-coverts and in tail. **Similar spp.** American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* is larger, darker and greyer, with darker legs and more patterned upperparts, in flight distinguished by white underwing and in tail. **Voice** Various drawn-out whistles and a sharp *kip* note.



Population estimate	Population trend	Range estimate (breeding/resident)	Country endemic?
10,000-19,999	decreasing	758,000 km <sup>2</sup>	No



**Range & population** *Charadrius montanus* breeds in south Alberta and south-west

Saskatchewan, **Canada**, east-central Montana (1,200 individuals), Wyoming (3,400 individuals), south-west Nebraska, eastern Colorado (8,600 individuals), Park County in Colorado (2,300 individuals), south-west Kansas, New Mexico and the Oklahoma panhandle, **USA**<sup>5</sup>. It has bred in Texas, east Utah<sup>1</sup> and once in eastern Arizona<sup>8</sup>. All these birds winter in Sacramento, San Joaquin and Imperial valleys, California<sup>2,7</sup>, south to Baja California, **Mexico**<sup>15</sup>, and irregularly in south Arizona and south Texas in the Blackland prairie<sup>5,11</sup>. Abundant in the 19th century, it declined to 8,000-9,000 birds in 1995, including a 63% decrease in 1966-1991<sup>5</sup>, but the population is now estimated at between 11,000 and 14,000 individuals<sup>19</sup>. These figures are likely to reflect an increase in counting accuracy rather than a recent population increase. Breeding was first successful in Nuevo León, Mexico, in 2004<sup>20</sup> following an unsuccessful attempt in 1998<sup>8,9</sup>; and in Coahuila in 1999<sup>16</sup>. These and/or northern birds regularly winter at Janos in Chihuahua<sup>2,12</sup>, with others reported from Sonora to Tamaulipas south to Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí<sup>3,4</sup>.

**Ecology:** It nests in heavily grazed, shortgrass prairie, xeric scrub and fallow fields, typically on prairie dog *Cynomys* spp. colonies<sup>5,8,10</sup>. It arrives in Canada and northern USA in late March-April and leaves in early August<sup>5</sup>. It is a dietary generalist in winter<sup>6</sup> when it inhabits semi-desert, dry, bare agricultural land and (in Mexico) breeding-type habitats<sup>2</sup>. In the Imperial Valley (California) wintering flocks show a preference for burnt Bermudagrass fields and grazed alfalfa<sup>17</sup>. It flocks in winter and on migration<sup>2</sup>.

**Threats** Hunting probably explains the long-term decline. More recently, cultivation and urbanisation have reduced nesting habitat, and intensive grazing has resulted in desertification and a reduced prey base<sup>2</sup>. Large declines in grazing species, especially bison and prairie dogs, have resulted in unsuitable habitat succession<sup>8,13</sup>. Over 70% of nests on cultivated land are destroyed by farm machinery<sup>14</sup>.

**Conservation measures underway** CMS Appendix II. Pawnee National Grassland, Colorado, and Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Montana, are important reserves<sup>14</sup>. It has been proposed for listing under the Federal Endangered Species Act<sup>9</sup>. Black-tailed prairie dog *Cynomys ludovicianus* has also been proposed, partly because it helps to maintain suitable habitat<sup>9</sup>. The release of Black-footed Ferret in Mexico is helping with prairie dog colony protection<sup>18</sup>.

**Conservation measures proposed** Define Mexican breeding and winter distribution<sup>2</sup>. Monitor USA and Canadian populations. Research movements of birds<sup>2</sup>. Protect prairie dog colonies, especially at Janos<sup>2</sup>. Restore prairie ecosystems (include protection/reintroduction of grazers). Protect remaining breeding and wintering habitats and prevent further conversion of grasslands. Stop agricultural disturbance at nest sites.

**References** **1.** Day (1994). **2.** S. D. Earsom and V. B. Estelle *in litt.* (1999). **3.** Gómez de Silva *et al.* (1996). **4.** Howell and Webb (1995a). **5.** Knopf (1996). **6.** Knopf (1998). **7.** Knopf and Rupert (1995). **8.** Knopf and Rupert (1999). **9.** F. L. Knopf *in litt.* (1998, 1999). **10.** Knowles *et al.* (1982). **11.** M. Lockwood *in litt.* (1999). **12.** P. Manzano *in litt.* (1998). **13.** Piersma (1996). **14.** Shackford *et al.* (1999). **15.** Wilbur (1987). **16.** Desmond and Ramirez (2002). **17.** Wunder and Knopf (2003). **18.** B. Leachman *et al. in litt.* (2003). **19.** Plumb *et al.* (2005). **20.** Gonzales Rojas *et al.* (2006).

#### **Further web sources of information**

[Audubon WatchList](#)

**Text account compilers** Phil Benstead (BirdLife International), Jeremy Bird (BirdLife International), Stuart Butchart (BirdLife International), Matt Harding (BirdLife International), Simon Mahood (BirdLife International), John Pilgrim (BirdLife International)

**Contributors** Greg Butcher (National Audubon Society), Stephen J Dinsmore, Vicky Dreitz, S. D. Earsom, V. B. Estelle, F. L. Knopf, B. Leachman, M. Lockwood, P. Manzano, Micheal Wunder

**IUCN Red List evaluators** Jeremy Bird (BirdLife International), Stuart Butchart (BirdLife International), Simon Mahood (BirdLife International)

**Recommended citation** BirdLife International (2010) Species factsheet: *Charadrius montanus*.

Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 24/8/2010

This information is based upon, and updates, the information published in BirdLife International (2000) *Threatened birds of the world*. Barcelona and Cambridge, UK: [Lynx Edicions](#) and BirdLife International, BirdLife International (2004) *Threatened birds of the world 2004 CD-ROM* and BirdLife International (2008) *Threatened birds of the world 2008 CD-ROM*. These sources provide the information for species accounts for the birds on the [IUCN Red List](#).

To provide new information to update this factsheet or to correct any errors, please email [BirdLife](#). To contribute to discussions on the evaluation of the IUCN Red List status of Globally Threatened Birds, please visit BirdLife's [Globally Threatened Bird Forums](#).